

Message Text

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SUBJ: EUROPEAN CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING: COUNTRY ASSESSMENT

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REVISED COUNTRY ASSESSEMENT FOLLOWS. RELATIONS WITH THE
GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND ARE GOOD, THOUGH WE HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO

PERSUADE THE IRISH TO SUPPORT U.S. POSITIONS ON RECENT ISSUES.
THOSE IN THE POWER QUEUE OF BOTH MAJOR PARTIES ARE GENERALLY
WELL DISPOSED TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE
RELATIONS ARE ALSO GOOD, BUT NEED ATTENTION. WHILE WE HAVE NO
MOMENTOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE IRISH, WE DO HAVE AREAS OF CONCERN
THAT COULD GROW WORSE.

1. MIDDLE EAST: FOR A VARIETY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL
REASONS, THE IRISH ARE SURPRISINGLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE ARABS.
RECENT, THEY HAVE IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES WITH THE EUROPEANS
MOST CRITICAL OF U.S. POLICIES. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, FOR EXAMPLE,
ASKED US IF WE HAD CONSIDERED THE SERIOUS LONG-TERM IMPACT ON
U.S. - EUROPEAN RELATIONS OF OUR SUPPORT FOR THE ISRAELIS.
IRELAND DERIVES THE VAST MAJORITY OF ITS OIL FROM THE MIDDLE
EAST, WHICH HEIGHTENS THIS CONCERN.

2. IRELAND AND THE EC: WITH THE ENTRY LAST JANUARY OF IRELAND
INTO THE EC, THE IRISH NATION BEGAN A PROCESS OF REORIENTATION
FROM AN ATLANTIC TO A EUROPEAN OUTLOOK. IRELAND JOINED EUROPE
BASICALLY BECAUSE IRELAND HAD NO CHOICE OTHER THAN TO
FOLLOW ITS MAJOR MARKET -- BRITAIN. HAVING JOINED, HOWEVER,
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IRELAND EXPECTS TO GAIN HANDSOMELY FROM EUROPE'S HIGH-PRICED

AGRICULTURAL REGIME AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY. MOREOVER, IRELAND NOW SEES ITSELF AS A MEMBER OF AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB. AND AS THE POOREST MEMBER OF THAT CLUB, IT HAS SUDDENLY BECOME JEALOUS OF THE RIGHTS AND PREROGATIVES OF MEMBERSHIP, PARTICULARLY WHEN THESE PREROGATIVES SEEMS TO BE QUESTIONED BY POWERFUL OUTSIDERS, LIKE OURSELVES. IN THE YEARS AHEAD WE EXPECT THAT IRELAND WILL BE ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT MEMBERS OF THE EC FOR US TO DEAL WITH, SPECIFICALLY IN THE AREA OF DEFENSE, BECAUSE OF IRELAND'S TRADITIONAL NEUTRALITY; AND IN THE REDUCTION OF AGRICULTURAL TRADE BARRIERS, BECAUSE IRELAND IS A MAJOR AGRICULTURAL COUNTRY. IN BOTH THESE MATTERS, WE EXPECT TO SEE THE IRISH ALIGNED WITH THE FRENCH, PERHAPS EVEN OUT IN FRONT OF THEM.

3. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE RELATIONS: THIS SHIFT IN IRISH INTERESTS FROM THE ATLANTIC TO EUROPE POINTS UP A SECOND AREA OF CONCERN, WHICH IS THE NEED TO PROMOTE BETTER POPULAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE U.S. IRELAND'S ENTRY INTO THE EC COMES AT A TIME WHEN OUR LEADING ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, OUR OVERWHELMING INFLUENCE, THE CANDOR WITH WHICH WE EXAMINE OUR OWN PROBLEMS AND FINALLY OUR TENDENCE TO TAKE THE IRISH FOR GRANTED HAVE ALL PRODUCED PROBLEMS WITH LOCAL PUBLIC OPINION. WE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAM, WHICH HAD BEEN ELIMINATED ALTOGETHER FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. SPECIFICALLY, WE NEED TO PROMOTE THE STUDY OF AMERICA IN IRELAND, WHICH IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN WESTERN EUROPE THAT DOES NOT HAVE AMERICAN STUDIES AS PART OF THE REGULAR CURRICULUM IN ANY OF ITS UNIVERSITIES.

4. NORTHERN IRELAND: FOR LAST YEAR AND ONE-HALF, IRISH AND BRITISH GOVTS HAVE BOTH AIMED AT ENDING THE CIVIL STRIFE BY POLITICAL COMPROMISE, WHILE RECONCILING CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND. TODAY, ODDS PROBABLY FAVOR A CONTINUED -- BUT PAINFUL AND JERKY -- WINDING DOWN OF CONFLICT. BUT THERE IS STILL A POSSIBILITY OF ALL-OUT CONFLICT. EVEN MORE PEACE-KEEPING TROOPS WOULD THEN BE NEEDED (THERE ARE NOW SOME 15,000 BRITISH SOLDIERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND), AND THERE WOULD BE A CHANCE OF LONG-TERM INSTABILITY THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND. US SECURITY INTERESTS COULD THEN BE AFFECTED, THOUGH NOT SO DIRECTLY AS THOSE OF THE BRITISH. SHORT OF THIS CIVIL-WAR SCENARIO, THE WIDE AREA OF DUBLIN/ LONDON AGREEMENT EASES OUR POLICY DECISIONS, BECAUSE WE CAN
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THOROUGHLY AGREE WITH BOTH. ONE SOURCE OF FRICTION REMAINS. EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE IRISH-AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN THE U.S. FOR US, THIS MERELY CREATES SOME INCONVENIENCE, BUT THE IRISH ARE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS OF MONEY AND ARMS TO THE IRA. FOR THE SAKE OF BOTH THE IRISH AND THE BRITISH, AS WELL AS FOR OUR OWN INTERESTS IN EUROPEAN STABILITY, WE MUST DO WHAT WE CAN TO DISCOURAGE CONTRIBUTIONS TO VIOLENCE IN IRELAND.

5. RELATIONS WITH THE EAST: DUBLIN WILL SOON HAVE ITS FIRST SOVIET EMBASSY. WE EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO EXPLOIT IRELAND'S POSITION AS THE ONLY NEUTRAL NATION IN THE EC AND THE ONLY AREA IN WESTERN EUROPE WITH SERIOUS CIVIL STRIFE. THE IRISH GOVT IS AWARE OF THE PROBLEM BUT MAY NOT YET BE EQUIPPED TO COPE WITH IT.
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